

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Chicago, Illinois
October 20, 2014

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Well, I want to thank Barbara for not just today, but for just being a friend for so many years, as is true for a lot of people in this room. When I look around, I see folks who had my back very, very early on and made a big bet on me. And I could not be more grateful.

And it's just good to be home, especially when the weather is reasonable, which doesn't happen often. *[Laughter]* And I'm glad that I got the kids back. We're starting to get to that point where Malia and Sasha are projecting out and thinking of their escape. And sometimes, I start getting a little choked up when I look at them because they're growing up too fast. So I'm glad to have them here, spend a little time with mom. And they look like they enjoy it. *[Laughter]*

I'm going to be very brief at the front, and then we'll have some time for questions. I want to thank Henry Muñoz, who is our tireless chair of the DNC Finance Committee and just does a great job and always dresses well. *[Laughter]* And wears things that I cannot pull off. Maybe as ex-President, I'll get some tips from him. *[Laughter]* I try a tan suit, and that's like—*[laughter]*—folks go crazy. And Henry has got the purple checks, and everybody thinks it's cool. I don't know what happened. *[Laughter]*

When we think back to when I first took office, one of the nice things about being home is actually, that it's a little bit like a time capsule because Michelle and I and the kids, we left so quickly that there's still junk on my desk, including some—*[inaudible]*—newspapers and all kinds of stuff. We always thought we'd be back every month and we'd kind of get everything in order and filed, and it hasn't happened. But it's useful, actually, to take a look at some of these old articles to remind ourselves of where we were when we took office and to think about the progress we've made over the last 6 years.

I mean, we were in the midst of almost an unprecedented economic crisis, losing 800,000 jobs a month. Unemployment went above 10 percent. We now have an unemployment rate that is at 5.9 percent. We've created over 10 million jobs and 55 months of uninterrupted private sector job growth, the longest in American history. The deficit has come down as rapidly as it has in decades, cut it by more than half.

We've got not only 10 million more people with health care that didn't have it before, but the cost of health care, health care inflation, has actually gone up slower than any time in the last 50 years. And as a consequence, we've saved about \$188 billion over the next 10 years in projected Medicare costs, all of which is contributing to lower deficits, but also is saving people in their pocketbooks, because the average family that has health insurance is probably paying about \$1,600 less per family than they otherwise would be paying if inflation had gone on the same clip as it was.

Energy is booming in this country. We've doubled the amount of clean energy. Solar energy has gone up tenfold, wind energy by threefold, all of which is contributing not only to a stronger economy and creation of jobs, but has also meant that we've reduced carbon emissions that create climate change faster than any other advanced nation.

College enrollment is up, high school graduations up, reading scores up, math scores up. There's almost no economic measure by which we're not doing better than we were when I took office. And if people were applying the same test that Ronald Reagan said—are you better off than you were?—the answer is yes.

But people are still anxious. And they're anxious for three reasons: One, internationally, we're seeing a tumultuous time in the Middle East. And although the direct threats against us are not imminent, what is true is, is that what's happening with ISIL, what's happening with respect to Iraq, with Syria, has a destabilizing effect that we have to pay attention to. And the United States is the only country that can galvanize the world community to help do something about it.

The Ebola crisis, which obviously has generated the only—has been the only story here in the United States for the last couple of weeks, is not an outbreak and an epidemic here. We've had one case of a person dying from Ebola that brought it in from outside; two nurses who, thankfully, seem to be doing better. To give you some sense of perspective, around 20,000 to 30,000 people die of flu every year. So far we've got one person dying of Ebola. But people are understandably concerned, in part because they've seen what's happened in Africa. And this is a virulent disease, and it is up to us, once again, to mobilize the world's community to do something about it, to make sure that not only we're helping on a humanitarian basis those countries but we're not seeing a continued epidemic and outbreak that can ultimately have a serious impact here.

The situation in Ukraine and Russia's aggression, that has concerned people. So you have this sense of uncertainty overseas.

Here at home, the concern is, is that although the economy is doing better, wages and incomes have not gone up. And the vast majority of growth, productivity increases, profits, wealth has accrued to folks at the very top of the economic pyramid, and we have not seen wages and incomes for ordinary folks go up for a couple of decades. And that makes people feel, even if things have gotten better, that they're still concerned about not only their future, but their children's futures.

And finally, there's a sense that things simply don't work in Washington, and Congress, in particular, seems to be completely gridlocked. And so all of this adds together to a sense on the part of folks that the institutions they rely on to apply commonsense decisions and to look out for working families across the country, that those institutions aren't working the way they're supposed to.

Now, here's the good news. First of all, progress is well within our reach—continued progress. There's some very sensible steps that we can take to make sure that we increase the minimum wage, that we have fair pay for women, that we rebuild our infrastructure, that we invest in early childhood education, all of which would accelerate growth, increase wages, increase incomes, and make people feel better about their own economic circumstances. We also know that the challenges overseas, as tough as they are, are ones that can be solved if we just apply the steady leadership and build the coalitions that are necessary as we're doing in Iraq and as we'll do in terms of tackling the Ebola crisis.

And the third problem that people are worried about, which is gridlock in Washington, is solvable by making sure that people actually vote in midterm elections. Because it's not true that we have this complete dysfunction in both parties. There's no false equivalence here. Democrats are for things that the majority of the American people are for. You don't see the

Democratic Party captive to some wild ideological faction. We're pretty much offering raising the minimum wage or fair pay legislation or rebuilding roads and bridges, stuff that used to be considered mainstream by both Democrats and Republicans. So the problem in Congress is that the House of Representatives, in particular, but there's a certain faction of Republicans in the Senate as well, have just decided that we are going to not do anything and obstruct any possible progress. And democracy has a cure for that. It is people voting.

And Democrats do have one congenital defect, and that is, is that we do not vote in midterms. That's what happened in 2010, and that's what could happen this year unless we're mobilized, organized, and focused. And that's why your attendance here today is so important.

I have absolute confidence in our ability to tackle every single challenge that's out there. But in order for us to tackle it effectively, we've got to have a Congress that functions.

And so whenever people ask me how am I doing, I say, actually, I'm doing pretty good. I love the work. It is an extraordinary privilege to every single day be able to work on behalf of the American people. And we're making steady progress just through executive actions and the work we're doing in terms of mobilizing around the Ebola crisis or the work we're going in terms of pulling the coalition around ISIL. Those are things that we can get done, and we'll chip away at these problems, and eventually, they'll get resolved.

But if I really want to see America get to where it should be by the end of my term, I've got to have a Congress that can get some things done. They don't have to agree—me on everything, but some basic stuff that the majority of the American people agree with we should be able to go ahead and get done.

And for that, we've got to have a decent turnout in the midterms. And that's what the DNC is all about. And that's why I'm so grateful for all your support. We're going to make one last push in these last several weeks. We've got a lot of just nail-biter races, and if we do what we're supposed to do, then I'm actually confident that we can get it done.

All right? Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:44 p.m. at the residence of Barbara Goodman Manilow. In his remarks, he referred to Amber Vinson and Nina Pham, nurses at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas in Dallas, TX, who were infected with the Ebola virus while providing care to Thomas E. Duncan, who died on October 8. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraisers :: Chicago, IL.

Locations: Chicago, IL.

Names: Manilow, Barbara Goodman; Muñoz, Henry R., III.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Pham, Nina; Vinson, Amber.

Subjects: Africa : West Africa, Ebola epidemic, response and containment efforts; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Diseases : Ebola, domestic response and containment efforts ; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Income inequality, increase; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Elections : 2014 congressional elections; Elections : Voter participation; Energy : Alternative and

renewable sources and technologies :: U.S. production; Health and medical care : Affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Illinois : Democratic Party events; Illinois : President's visits; Iraq : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Russia : Relations with Ukraine; Ukraine : Russia, role.

DCPD Number: DCPD201400787.